# The RedBird Word

Vol. 36 May 2003 No. 8

Alton High School
2200 College Ave.
Alton, IL 62002

A Walk in Our World

May

RBW

# Things change and then people change

High school has taught me many lessons, but the most important lesson I've learned is to not be afraid of change.

As an eighth grader, the idea of attending high school level classes never caused my knees to shake. It was the responsibilities that I'd have to take on that caused me to quiver. I was scared of making the transition between sweet, innocent kid to independent, free-spirited and sometimes rebellious teenager. I have always been a very nostalgic person, and back then my parents were asking me to leave the good old days of freeze tag and butterfly hunting behind in favor of Chemistry, Algebra IV, and a part-time job. Panic began to set in!

I was so terrified of change that I didn't become the person I wanted to be. Instead, I changed into a person who was sociably acceptable. As a result, my fear caused me to lose control over who I wanted to become. I began living a lie.

Freshman year, instead of participating in theatre, like I wanted, I tried out for volleyball, something I felt safe participating in because it was what everyone else did. I started worrying about the clothes I wore and the way my hair moved when I turned my head. I was obsessed with what other people thought about me, especially boys.

As an underclassman, I once told a good friend, "Things change, people change." In other words, I was afraid of the future's obstacles, which would change me and my loved ones. For the next two years, after I said that, instead of me controlling my life, it controlled me.

Then my junior year, Change forced me to face him. While returning home from musical rehearsal, my boyfriend, Andrew, and I totaled both our cars, by running into each other. It was a very stupid thing to do. Like a gentleman, he shouldered all the blame. As a result, I wasn't allowed to go with him to Prom.

All of a sudden, I was faced with my greatest fear: losing a loved one because of a major change in my life. My mom forbade us from seeing each other. Every day I came home to lectures about how I had an awful, irresponsible boyfriend. She wanted us to break up. All my arguements about being lucky to be alive fell on deaf ears. (Ironically, my sister liked Andrew just as much after the accident as before, and she was sitting in my van next to me.) Eventually, I exhausted all my tears and collapsed into bed. Each night ended the same way, as a nightmare.

This incident helped me break free from my fear of change because I realized that people change things, not "Things change, people change." I conquered my fear of the future by learning how to take life's vinegar, pour it over my salad, and eat it for lunch. Understanding this, I talked with my mom.

As I write this, I'm looking at a 2002 Prom picture of Andrew and me. Soon, there will be one from 2003. Looking back, I advise my fellow classmates not to be afraid of Change because he happens to everyone. It's how you handle him which determines your success...if you have the courage to be different.

Sarah Jay Whitney


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# Seniors' open campus memories forgotten

While I am preparing to graduate I think about all the good times I had at Alton High School. When I hear "good time," freshman year comes to mind. No one else at AHS had the privilege of open campus, except this years graduating seniors.

Open campus was something everyone heard about when we were in middle school, but it didn't become a reality until our freshman year. It gave students a break from school for an hour. When the freedom bell rang, we would walk uptown or upperclassmen would let us pile into their cars to go to the fast-food restaurant of their choice.

Having off-campus lunch wasn't the only great thing about freshman year. There were school-sponsored pit ball tournaments. Students were allowed to picnic on the grass, in the pit, and some would serenade the rest of the students with their musical talents. No one got in trouble for sitting in cars, and kids wanted to stick around after 3:00 on nice days to discuss plans for the weekend. Now, most students can't get home fast enough, at least for the seniors.

The memories of open-campus and freedom will die with the class of 2003. Some people say it would have been better if we never had open campus our freshman year, but then I guess we wouldn't have the memories of how fun AHS was our first year of high school.

Erin Hill

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# Living with my disease

I remember the day I came home sick from the day care. I could hear my mom talking to my dad on the phone about how bad I looked; I was several different colors in the face. My dad drove home as fast as he could. Shortly after, I was in an ambulance on my way to Alton Memorial Hospital. I can't really remember what happened, but I know I was transported to Cardinal Glennon Hospital. By the time that I got there, I was completely unconcious. When I woke up, the doctors told me that I had juvenile diabetes.

Diabetes is a disease that occurs when T cells attack and decimate the beta cells that are needed to produce insulin in the pancreas. As a result, the pancreas makes too little or no insulin at all.

So there I was, lying in a hospital bed on my fifth birthday. I didn't know what was happening to me, and my parents hadn't arrived at the hospital yet. I didn't know this was something that would change my life forever, and I was scared.

I was afraid to go home because I knew all the kids would look at me differently since I had special needs. I wondered what they would think of me, and how things would be different. For a five-year-old, it was hard to see kids eating everything that I couldn't eat and doing whatever they wanted. I wasn't capable of doing the "normal" things other kids did, and my parents wouldn't let me out of their sight for fear that something would happen to me.

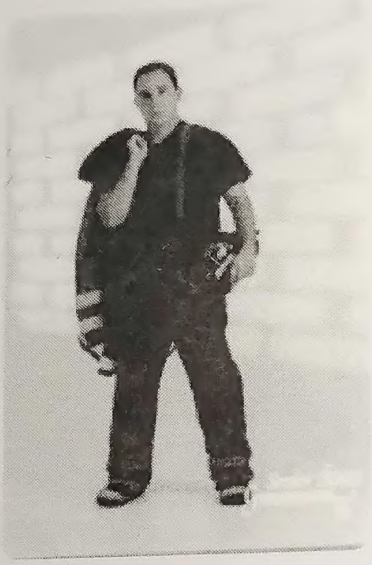
From that moment on, I took several steps to learn more about the new me. I went to a diabetic camp in Missouri, called Camp E.D.I. (Exercise, Diet, and Insulin) and attended informational classes with my parents. At camp, I met other kids who had diabetes and they were moving on with their lives. When I got back from camp, the doctors told me that I had to learn how to give myself a shot and not let my parents do it for me. As I sat on my porch with my dad watching, I picked up a needle and slowly put the needle into my skin. I was shaking. My dad got up and screamed because he was so happy to see that I had given myself a shot without any help from my parents.

As time went on, I accepted what I had; growing up with diabetes was very difficult with my body changing and my blood sugars all over the place. I can definitely say my life hasn't been easy. There are people who know me, but they don't know that I have diabetes. People approach me and ask me what is on my side. I am still learning things about diabetes everyday.

I get frustrated with myself about the little things I do wrong, like my blood sugar getting too high or my insulin pump coming out. I know I need to take better care of myself so I can live a happy and healthy life. Other people have it a lot worse than me; I am fortunate that I have what I have and not something that could be deadly.

Sarah Cleaves

# A hero's dream



All my life, I only wanted to do two things; be a firefighter or a ghostbuster. When I was six years old, I found out I was afraid of ghosts, so ever since then I have been running full speed toward the Fire Department.

When I was ten, I discovered the movie *Backdraft* which made me want to be a firefighter even more. After all, anyone who has seen the movie has to agree the love scene with the fire truck was pretty cool. Never the less, the idea of being a hero sounded extremely appealing to me. One day my aunt took me to station house No.4 which was located on College Ave. where CVS is now. I was so excited about getting to go inside of a real firehouse that when I got home I put on my bathrobe and a backwards baseball hat and went in my back yard to play fireman. I played this game on and off until I was twelve and then my dad told me it would probably be a good idea to stop.

Being a firefighter is the most important thing in my life. I am not sure what made me want to be a firefighter. It's a dangerous job and it is more likely that a firefighter will die in his or her line of work than a ghostbuster, but if I'm going to die early I can't think of a better way than trying to save a life or some families home.

Last year a friend of mine told me that she knew a seven-teen year-old guy from East Alton who was involved in a program through the fire department. The next day she came to school and gave me his phone number. I called him and he told me about the East Alton Fire Department Explorer Post 2333. Needless to say, I joined.

An Explorer post is a program that allows kids ages fourteen to twenty-one to experience the profession they want to get into. In June of 2002 I went on my first eight hour shift. After one hour, lieutenant told me I should go out to the truck bay and find some turn out gear. I found gear that fit so I was looking for a pair of boots. The first pair I put on were about two sizes too big, but before I could get them off the fire alarm went off so I had to go big boots and all. The call was a false alarm. On the way home, I sat shot gun in Engine 51 which was being driven by a probationary firefighter. The lieutenant was behind us in Ladder 1. We kept hearing the air horn going off and we couldn't figure out why. Well come to find my large boot was hitting the foot peddle, which sounds the horn. I felt pretty stupid.

In March of 2003 I was promoted to Chief of Explorers, and I am getting closer and closer to my goal of becoming a firefighter. Going to AHS has helped me in two ways. One: there is such a diverse group of people here, I can walk into any house and not feel uncomfortable with the type of people I see. And two: if it's hot, don't touch it.

Ricky Mobilio

# Why not? Why not?

My whole life, I have always been very consequence-conscious. I rarely took risks that might have negative consequences because I assumed the safe route always paid off. What I didn't realize was that you never know what you're missing if you don't take a chance. This applies to almost any area of life; from dining to dating.

High school has helped me gain confidence. Last year, when class officer elections rolled around, I thought nothing of them. I had never held an office, let alone president. I was a member of everything and I loved being involved; I just never had the guts to see if my peers would elect me to a leadership position. So, when my friends urged me to run for Senior Class President, I decided, "What the heck." I began looking at the elections in this light: if I don't run, I will wonder for the rest of my life how I would be different had I run (those of you who know me know that I am not exaggerating on my wondering capabilities). At least if I ran, and then lost the election, I would know. There would be closure. I could accept the loss and know that I tried.

The risk actually paid off. I won the election and I have never loved any responsibility more. I have never been so thankful that I made a single decision. There would be so many experiences that I would have missed. I have had the privilege of working with amazing people to put on some memorable events. If I could do it all over again, I wouldn't change a minute of it.

I have a six-year-old sister who watches the Disney Channel on a regular basis. One of the key shows that the network runs is called Lizzie McGuire. Maybe you've heard of it. Anyway, it's been a successful little show and Disney has become an avid supporter of Hilary Duff (aka Lizzie McGuire). She recently surfaced as a talented singer and one of her newest music videos is entitled "Why not?" The lyrics go the chorus go as follows:

Why not?
Take a crazy chance
Why not?
Do a crazy dance
If you lose a moment
You might lose a lot
So why not? Why not?

Courtney Schien

My thoughts exactly.

# Life's "best time"

It was the East St. Louis game, with four seconds left on the clock I can remember seeing the fans run on to the field; yeah it was just a little high school football game, but even as I sit here and write this I am still getting goose-bumps. I know that not everyone that is reading this can relate to what I am saying, but wait a minute. My experiences through high school have led me to believe the old cliche "high school is the best time of your life." I don't want to believe it because I have so much life left to live.

As all the things are happening in your life, you don't realize what is really going on or how exciting they really are. The past four years of high school have brought to me so many things that I will remember forever. One of my best high school memories came when a certain Mr. Irresistible somehow caught my porch on fire while a few of us guys were cooking dinner for some lady friends. It is the times like this that you hope can be remembered forever, just to have some memories of friends from AHS. It is not about my personal experiences though, I have had both good and bad times at this school; just as all of you will.

Every high school student goes through the same process as the next. Even with all of the changes around this school, it is still AHS. The diversity in the school allows students to meet and become friends with all walks of life. Many people in your class will go on to be doctors, lawyers, and possibly trashmen. I cannot wait to see, in ten years how much everyone has changed. We have seen so many changes in our class, just over the last four years, it will be amazing to see everyone after ten years.

There is one thing that I will never forget about AHS as a school.. (Except for Mrs. Brave's great legacy) That memory is one of a great chance. The football team gave me a chance to meet so many people and to create new friendships. Everyone at this school should try do be involved in some activity, just to meet the other people that are involved. The extra-curricular activities at this school help so much in the social makeup of the classes. I personally commend the school and the supervisors of these activities bringing students together.

High school is like the reality version of daytime soap operas. There is so much back stabbing and so on, that no one can keep track. Now that I look at it all though I can laugh, it may have been a major deal at the time, but after a while it seems senseless.

Whether or not high school is the best time of our lives, I cannot judge, because I still have a few more years to live. I know one thing, I tried to make the best out of the four years that I was here, and I am satisfied. I met great people, specifically a great person, and I had fun while doing it.

The only advice that I can give is that no matter if high school is the best time of your life or not try your hardest to meet new people, have tons of fun, and maybe learn a little bit while you're doing it.

Lindsay West '03

# Trashy cinema takes over

While watching *The Daily Show* a few months ago my heart stopped cold. The Oscars were fast approaching. Films such as *Chicago*, *The Pianist* and *The Hours* were making their debut. Then the dreadful words leaked out of Jon Stewart's mouth, "*Kangaroo Jack* was number one at the box office this weekend." He appropriately retorted, "America, I'm not speaking to you."

This is just one of several offenses that U. S. citizens have made against cinema. Why? The root of the problem is quite common: ignorance.

Film is shunned as an art form. Educators do not want to waste their time to implant some good taste in their students. In extreme circumstances, they have bad taste too. Only large triple A schools have programs for film appreciation.

Film is as much of an aesthetic as literature, and the two should be taught side by side. Literary devices are found in good films as they are in good literature.

Parallelism can be found in such pictures as *Lilo and Stitch*. Symbolism can be found in *Citizen Kane*, and, more recently, *Spirited Away*. Independent films are known for their use of such devices. *Donny Darko* uses point of view and symbolism to elaborate its plot line. Ironically, this fine piece of work didn't even make it to theaters. *Spirited Away*, although it was recognized by the Academy, has failed to gain popularity in the states. Its genre of foreign film is mostly to blame. Purpose and tone can be found in any movie worth the six dollars to see.

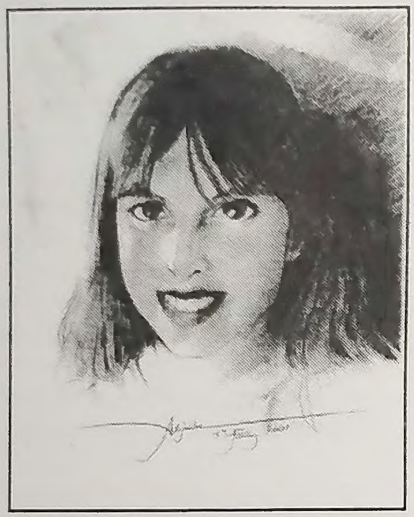
The poor uneducated masses line up at the box office every week and kiss two hours of their lives good-bye to see idiotic pictures worthy of no one's attention. Their taste is dictated by popular culture.

Fans of independent films and foreign language pictures have to search far and wide to find their entertainment. Small town fans may not even get their fix without traveling to a city. If the American public knew the quality of work they were missing, these Van Goghs of the cinematic world would not be stuffed in broken down theaters in the shady parts of town.

I cry out to my peers: do not be fooled by the society that surrounds you! Next time you are at Blockbuster pick up a Sundance award winner, and next time you are at a movie ask yourself why you are there. You will not be disappointed.

Amy Stakell

# Lessons learned in Chicago



Some might view my high school years as boring, mundane. I never went to any dances, proms, plays, or parties. I've never been to any sports events, and the only choir concerts I ever attended were in those fleeting months during my freshman and sophomore years when I sang in them myself, a soft alto among other altos, sopranos, tenors, and basses. *I've never been on a date*. Please, don't die of shock now. There is such a thing as people who do not date in high school.

Are these wasted years, perhaps? I mean, who *hasn't* been to at least their Senior Prom, or *one* party during the four years spent in high school? Some probably *do* see this as a waste, but those who do probably don't have an inkling of what it's like to be me.

I was the one who wandered the hallways alone, ate lunch alone, walked home alone. Don't think I'm complaining when I say this, though. I don't mind solitude. It's just the way things have always been. I have, however, suffered the brunt of my peers' insults for one reason or another. I've gone through every nightmare that anyone at the top of the social ladder can ever imagine; rumors, threats, insults, physical assaults, you name it. I never knew the names or faces of these rivals, and to this day I still don't. Something tells me they didn't know me either. I've learned not to care either way. Knowing this, is it any wonder that I've never been to a party?

I found out a few weeks ago that life doesn't always have to be like this, taking an anonymous role among the student body. I didn't come upon this realization on my own; it exploded from life itself. It was something I didn't even see coming.

I expected the Journalism 2 Chicago trip to be a fun, wild three days of taxi rides, jazz, and good food. When going on such trips, it's become a norm for me to go unnoticed. I don't mind it; I rather like walking around happy, chattering people, making my own observations and simply drinking in the surroundings. This trip, however, was different. My roommates chattered *with* me, rather than amongst themselves. It was almost as if they'd known me for years. We went nearly everywhere together and had a wonderful time. It was a rare pleasure simply to be included, and that in itself was enough to place this Chicago trip among my fondest memories.

During the four years spent at Alton High, I've learned to turn a deaf ear towards such petty things as rumors and insults -who is going to *care* ten years from now what so-and-so said about me anyway? I certainly won't. I also re-learned a lesson that was just as important during those three crazy days in Chicago: it's ok to have fun and trust a little every once and awhile. There are good people out there. It's all a matter of finding them.

Audrey Wildhagen

# He said, she said

I heard from my brother's best friend's cousin's girlfriend that he cheated on her with that girl from English class. Does this sound familiar to you? If there's one important lesson I've learned throughout high school, this would be it: everybody will always have something to say about somebody else. No matter who did what, gossip seems to constantly be floating around the halls and classrooms of AHS. People will talk about anything from who said what to what couples are or aren't doing with each other.

Although these interesting bits of information may seem amusing at the time, they are often so far from the truth that they hold little, if any, reality at all. In fact, most people know that, but still continue to not only believe the rumors, but spread them also. The false statements spread like a deadly virus, creating a vicious cycle of lies and deceit.

However, there is something more about gossip, other than its immorality, that makes it a dangerous weapon. The majority of the time, it is not used to make people sound good, but to take their reputations and destroy them. With a few words to the right people, a girl can be transformed into a promiscuous loser overnight. We've all seen these people: the ones who end up hurt and ashamed, not because of what they did, but because of what their *peers* said they did.

But the most disturbing part about gossip is that it is so prominent. It's almost become socially acceptable to spread heinous lies about others. In fact, most people would admit to creating or spreading false accusations at one time or another.

Gossip surrounds us all; it's written on the bathroom doors and whispered in the hallways. We all need to realize that there is a huge world outside of high school, and although people will inevitably talk, we need to focus on the truth instead of the rumors.

Amanda Thomas

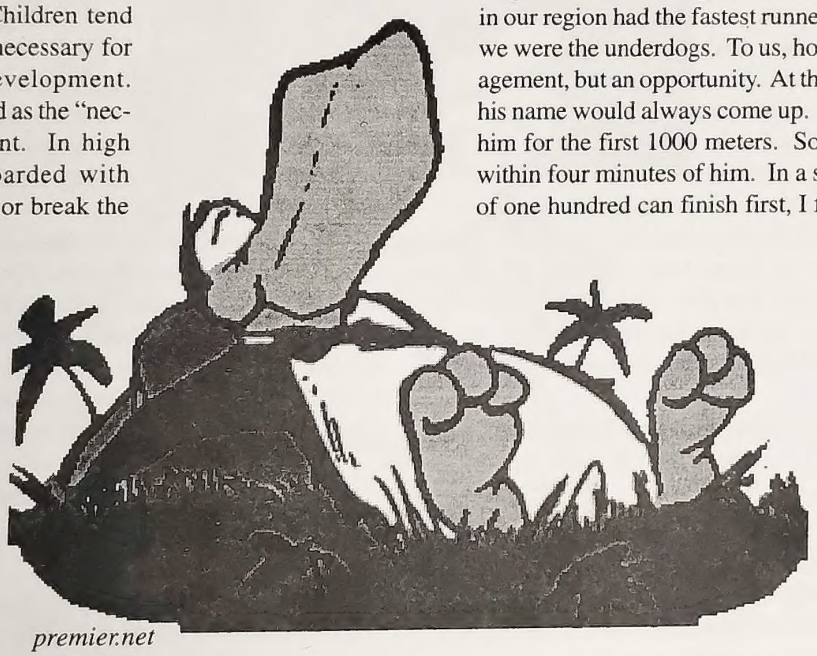
# We Know 5



## The steady trial by faith

Struggling to trust a peddle that moved under my foot's weight, the six-year-old version of me was coming to grips with the inevitable catastrophe of my first two-wheeled biking experience. I gripped the handle bars and vehemently opposed my father's decision to soon push and release me. Upon his movement, I was forced to move. The peddles turned, and his hands dropped off. With my mind racing in tune with the peddles, I held on to the one thing that would not steer me off course: my faith.

Twelve years after that ensuing crash, I find myself still clenching the figurative handlebars and not knowing nor fearing the result. Children tend to find that certain risks are necessary for physical and emotional development. These risks are often perceived as the "necessary evils" of development. In high school, children are bombarded with choices that ultimately make or break the foundation of the upcoming adults inside of them. The evils surface once the hands drop off, and they may need to readjust their grips to regain that stability.



*premier.net*

Even with the chaotic push towards maturity and the distractions surrounding it, these now-young adults move on with their faith guiding them. It need not be the religious sense; sometimes, parent's faith in them shall be the only guiding force.

Trust becomes the key that unlocks the inner maturity of a good-sensed young adult. With this knowledge, everyday distractions become trivial in the young adult's quest to avoid being the stereotypical teenager. All that is required to finish the quest is a few kind words from people who simply believe in them.

At our high school, each senior has grown with the faith of others at their side. This school houses dozens of authority figures who greatly desire to see their students excel. Their motivation may be the most discreet sense of the word, yet their efforts come full circle upon completion of high school for the student. I myself am a product of the chances, opportunities and risks that others have given or taken on me.

The respect that we have for our teachers and administrators come with the maturity we seek. The budding maturity is nearly complete, the upcoming adult is developed by trial and error, and the peddles are still constantly turning. Each is powered by a sense of faith; faith that strives to empower each person with the will to risk, mature and succeed.

Alex Walker

## The sweet agony of defeat

There is nothing like competition to bring out that feeling of accomplishment. When running a race, it is standing on the winner's podium at the end that makes all of your effort feel worthwhile. The moment of recognition that weeks of hard work have been building up to finally comes. The crowd cheers, flashbulbs go off, and the champion marches away to celebrate his victory. This is about the time I usually stagger across the finish line. Yeah, maybe I'm not always the winner. But the best experiences do not always come from winning.

During my seasons with the school's cross-country team, winning was not something we were known for. Another high school in our region had the fastest runner in the state, so at every meet we were the underdogs. To us, however, this was not a discouragement, but an opportunity. At the practices before every meet, his name would always come up. Someone wanted to stay with him for the first 1000 meters. Someone else planned to finish within four minutes of him. In a sport where only one man out of one hundred can finish first, I found victory in pushing myself.

An extracurricular activity does not have to be all sweat and blood to be worthwhile. During cross country practices, the team would frequently conduct "morale-building exercises". Gordon Moore Park features berry-covered trees strategically located along the running trails. If the freshmen runners began slacking off, it only took one berry-pelting ambush to whip them back into shape. The most revered tradition, however, was saved for practices during a heavy rain. The once menacing hills and valleys along the trails melted into brown slop. Our clothes got so wet that staying clean was no longer a concern. That's when the mud started to fly. Eisenhower's invasion of Normandy looked like a pillow fight compared to these carefully choreographed mud battles. It was diversions like these that gave me perspective. I realized the value of an activity was not determined solely by how I finished on paper.

Waking up at 4:30 in the morning to spend five hours on a school bus. Washing your clothes in a drinking fountain. Running three miles without thinking about that hoagie you had for breakfast. The high school experiences that will stay with me did not come from French worksheets or calculus tests but from activities like cross country. And from my brief but illustrious (to me, anyway) running career, I have found that there is more to be gained from participation than there is from victory. As John Mortimer once said, "At school I never minded the lessons. I just resented having to work terribly hard at playing."

Jeff McDonald

## My brush with stardom reminded me to just be me

As I reflect back on my senior year, all of the things I have accomplished make me smile. One of the most memorable experiences I have had this year, and probably the most rewarding, was my chance at a dream that I never thought would come true. On October 29, 2002, as a birthday present from my mom and dad, I went to Nashville, Tennessee, to try out for *American Idol*. Of course this was a biggest and most exciting event ever, but what I learned from it was something I will carry with me my whole life.

I remember arriving at the Nashville Municipal Auditorium around 10:30 p.m. and seeing all of the people already lined up outside and thinking to myself, "What did I talk myself into?" I had never seen so many people! I decided right then that whatever happened was for the best, and I walked up the stairs through the winding maze of ropes to stand in line.

After a freezing cold night of sleeping on the concrete, I finally got my bracelet that allowed me to try out the next day. When people ask me about the tryouts for *American Idol,* they always ask me if I was scared or if they were mean to me. First of all, the tryouts were all hype. I stood in a room with four other people and sang 30 seconds of a song and then they told me that I had made it.

I was shocked that they had chosen me to make it through to the next round because this meant that I was one of the 150 out of the 1500 that made it. This accomplishment was worth the whole trip to me. I had done something that I never would have thought was possible.

Although, I didn't make it past the next round, I learned a lot from my three day experience with *American Idol.* Of course I would have loved to make it farther, but the reality is that *American Idol* is not all it is cracked up to be.

The first thing the judges told us to remember was that *American Idol* is a television show and ratings are all they are trying to get. They told us that they didn't care whether we were the best singers in the world or whether we were the prettiest people, they were going to pick people that would bring in the best ratings.

The minute they told us that I realized that no matter what happened it was going to be the best thing for me. Even though I love singing and I love *American Idol*, it is something that I would only do once in my life.

The other most frequently asked question is, "Would you ever do it again?" Of course I love the idea of being an American idol. However, now that I have seen behind the show's lights and glamour, I have realized that it wasn't for me. I will always be grateful for the experience of *American Idol* and what I have learned about myself from it. The most important thing I have learned is that dreams really do come true and don't ever change to become something you're not.

## I couldn't even cry

Kristin Hammond

Life was great the night before the morning of November 7, 2002. It was the first day of parent-teacher conferences. My grades were excellent. I was motivated to work out. I didn't have to go to work. I was going to sleep in. My teachers were going to get to meet my parents . . . It was going to be a great day.

Dreaming of the wonderful day ahead of me, I was sleeping great. All of a sudden, it was seven a.m. and I hear my mom raising her voice saying, "Honey. . .Honey . . . Wake up. . . Ohmigod. . . *Please*!!!" I was actually mad at her for waking me up until I heard three numbers being dialed and again hearing, "Ohmigod. . . *No*!!!" Immediately, I woke up and stood in my doorway, which was exactly parallel to my parent's bedroom. With her back toward me, my mom leaned over my dad who was sprawled out over the bed. He was so light with purple lips. His dark brown beard had turned a bright orange due to the rapid decaying process. It was him but it wasn't. He was puffy, lifeless and pasty.

Thinking he was choking, I immediately ran into their room and jumped on my dad hitting his chest forcefully. My mom threw the phone at me and told me to talk to the 911 people while she did CPR. The man on the phone kept asking me dumb questions like what was my name and how old I was. . . sh** like that. . . . He was asking all of this while my father, the only one I've ever had and might ever have, was dying. I told him to F*** off and asked him where the ambulance people were. He said that they should be there. All I could say was like, "Well, they're not."

Finally, I heard the siren and ran downstairs. I opened the door. Those people who were supposed to save lives for a living were just *walking* up my driveway. *Walking!!!* They finally got upstairs and took one look at my dad and said, "He's gone there's nothing we can do."

My mom screamed and fell to the floor. I had to be strong for her and talk to the police and coroner. I couldn't believe this was happening and threw up. I was so emotionless. I couldn't accept what was happening.

That had to be the longest non-planned day of my life. I take that back. It was the longest week of my life! They said when we had found him he had been "gone" for at least two hours, so we would need to act fast on funeral arrangements. We told them that he wanted to be cremated.

I don't think it set in that he had died until we were in the crematorium. They pulled out this huge box with Daddy in it. I could see from the curves and lines of the box where Daddy's belly was. That casket was more like an oversized shoe box. We put flowers and lots of pictures in the casket. My mom, my sister, his daughter from a previous marriage, my uncle Louie and I were present.

That day and week were the most difficult and scariest days of my life, and I couldn't even cry.

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# News One

RBW May

## A four year journey with Darth Custer, a Calculus Ninja, and Curvey Buffett

It seems like just yesterday when I was a wide-eyed freshman about to start a four-year adventure. I have since evolved from that freshman to a wise and experienced senior. I have survived three years of PE, finding a seat in the cafeteria, and the never-ending joy of scrambling for an ID in the morning.

I have met lifelong friends, met the love of my life and lost her on more than one occasion, eaten "meat" in the cafeteria that can only be described as processed cat, and I have grown.

I have grown as a person. I have evolved, and these years have been an Odyssey of sorts for me. They have been a life-altering journey, and I will never be the same.

On this journey, I have met many people I will never forget. A few teachers have stuck out in my mind the most. A teacher is more than a person who gives tests and writes notes on the board. They are more than lectures and grades. A true teacher is someone who helps give you the skills needed for your journey throughout life.

My junior year I got a new Cross-Country coach, Mr. Curvey. In my years at AHS, I have had many coaches, averaging one every year, but out of them all, Mr. Curvey is the best. He has been there to help me in my running and with life in general. He has shown my team true leadership and how to still have fun even when I am in pain. He is a great coach and any runner is lucky to have the honor of throwing up at the expense of one of his workouts.

During my first day of Calculus, my new teacher, Mr. Cook walked in the class and the first thing he said was, "This is going to be your favorite class in high school and I will be one of your favorite teachers!" How, I asked myself, could parametric equations be fun and this bald guy be one of my favorite teachers? What audacity does it take for a person to make a declaration like that?

He was right, Mr. Cook is always right. His class was and is my favorite, and he has been one of the best teachers I have ever had. I came to his class having learned nothing from my previous years. Mr. Cook was willing to take the time to help me learn a subject as difficult as Calculus. He took something that seems like a foreign language to me and made it understandable.

Through his cheesecake parties or his misplaced notation that he is a "Calculus Ninja," Mr. Cook has taught the one class I always looked forward to for the past two years. As weird as this may seem, he has managed to make Calculus fun, and he has been one of my favorite teachers.

The last true teacher I have met in high school is the indomitable Mr. Day. He is an intimidating man: he is large, has a mullet and knows anything and everything about Tom Custer. He is also the best teacher I have ever had.

History has always come easy to me; I have never struggled in it. In all my other history classes, I managed to sleep through and still get an A. I came into his class with that same attitude that he couldn't teach me anything I didn't know already. I was wrong; Mr. Day taught me a lot about history. He also taught me one of the hardest lessons to learn for any teenager: that I am not always right.

Mr. Day taught me that there is more to life than meets the eye. His lessons went beyond mere history. His lessons were hard won proverbs about how to live a life. One thing he said to me has and always will remain with me. He told my class, "To go out and make the difference; to change this world for the better." That is his challenge he sets forth for his students.

In that one phrase, Mr. Day summed up the purpose of his existence and that of us all. His job and that of other teachers and mentors like him, is to take that wide-eyed freshman, and give them the skills and knowledge to go out and make a difference, to change this world for the better.

By this I don't think he meant to change the world by winning a Noble Peace Prize or making some great scientific breakthrough. I believe he meant that changing the world starts with one life at a time. Make the difference in one person's life, and already, the world is a better place.

Life is a journey, and I have reached the top of one hill. I am staring across an abyss, and I have no idea what is on the other side. I only know what has happened to me, and that regardless of whatever is out there, I am ready to take on the next leg in my journey. I take with me friends and lessons I have gotten in past years. I leave behind no regrets and only bad memories.

I have taken Mr. Day's challenge to heart and will go forth in life and change things for the better and make the difference, just like my true teachers have done so in me. For that I will always be grateful.

Kenny Ross

***"Dream like you will live forever, live like you will die today."***
***-James Dean***

# The RedBird Word breezes through the big Windy City

*Alicia Johnson*

As this year came close to an end, Journalism 2 took one last trip together. The 18 seniors and five chaperones spent three days and two nights in Chicago at the Congress Plaza Hotel on Michigan Ave. They also shared many laughs and made many memories.

Arriving at the train station before the sun was up proved to be challenging for some, but everyone made it on time, well almost everyone. Amanda Thomas was the only person to make the mistake of sleeping a little too long, but she did end up in Chicago later in the day after some father-daughter time during the four hour drive.

After eating lunch, J2 members headed off to the Art Institute of Chicago. Chaperones, Mrs. Brave, Mrs. Hilgard, Mrs. Downey, Mr. Tucker and his wife, all seemed to enjoy the art no matter how many times they had seen it before. Some students, like Blake Schrumpf, thought the masterpieces hanging on the wall were nothing more than something that could have been created by a second grader. After five hours, most of the students were crashing on a large concrete bench. Ask Blake how comfortable that was to sleep on.

Later that night, the group took cabs to the restaurant, Ed DeBevics. Ed DeBevics is set up as a 50s style cafe where the waiters and waitresses are encouraged to be rude and sarcastic to the customers (it is assumed that the dinees understand that the attitudes are all part of the fun). Mrs. Brave, did not think that was entertaining enough so she paid one waiter five dollars to make fun of Courtney Schien through the entire meal. Courtney was a good sport about it, responding by simply firing back. By the end of the meal he had offered her a job to be a waitress.

Day two began at the Chicago Board of Trade. The students then visited the Museum of Broadcast Communication. After lunch, they headed to the Field Museum. That night, students had the choice of going to Navy Pier or a comedy club called Second City. Abbey Bates chose to go to Second City and she said, "It was really funny and different. We all laughed a lot."

Day three began with 18 exhausted seniors packing their bags and preparing to shop on Michigan Ave. or to visit Shedd's Aquarium. They met back at the hotel, grabbed their bags and a cab, and departed for the train station. The train ride back was quiet after an hour or so of arguing over who would take over each editor position next year. Once everyone had agreed, they all fell sound asleep.

# NHS members tap this year's inductees

*Natasha Whitehead*

The National Honor Society held a tapping ceremony in the Alton High auditorium on April 3, during second hour. The ceremony was held to inform students of their induction into NHS and to congratulate them for their academic excellence both in the school and in the community.

In order to become a member of the National Honor Society, a student must have a cumulative GPA of 3.75 or higher, possess good leadership and character qualities and have a work ethic in the community.

The parents of the students who were tapped were invited to attend the ceremony through a letter they received from the school. The parents that came were seated in the balcony so they would not ruin the surprise for the not-yet-informed inductees.

At the assembly, several speeches were made by different people from the school and the community. The speakers included Superintendent Jim Baiter, Principal Philip Trapani, president of NHS, Carl McMullen; and adviser of NHS, Karen Sutton.

Then current members of the NHS, who were lined up along the walls of the auditorium, took turns tapping the new members that were seated in the audience. Then they tapped them and sent them up to the stage where their names were announced and they joined the other inductees.

Formal induction into the National Honor Society was held on April 3, at 6:30 p.m. in the cafeteria. Current NHS officers gave speeches and performed a candle lighting ceremony. The new members then recited a pledge of loyalty to their new position as a member of NHS. Following the pledge ceremony, each new member's name was read to the audience and then they were given a certificate, an NHS membership card and an NHS pin.

*Senior Brandon Krepel taps junior Adam Tucker at the NHS tapping ceremony. Photo by Sarah Whitney.*

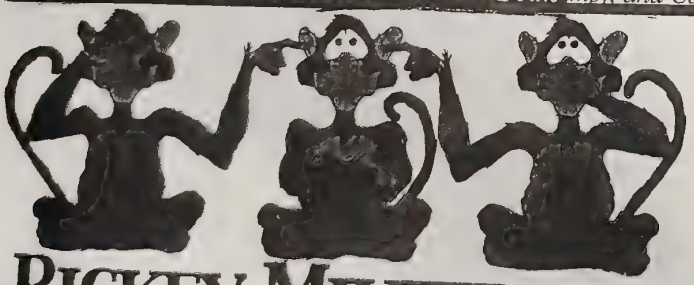
# WARNING! WILD ANI

*The crazy , Journalism 2 guys , model their skills for the RedBird camera. They're ready to bust out and know how to look go while doing so. Photo by Sarahjay Whitney.*
*Back row left to right: Alex McMullen, Zac West, Anthony Gater, Kenny Ross, Joe Hilgard, and Jeff McDonald.*
*Front row, left to right: Rickey Militello, Blake Schrumpf, and Carl McMullen.*

## Meet our boys

The girls of Journalism 2 have lived with them all year, now it's Alton High's turn. We love them. We hate them. We've fought with them, and we've hugged them. We're surprised that some of them are still alive.

Not just any guy can pass for a J2 boy, especially when the staff is run by the girls. They have to have the guts to voice their opinions, the determination to complete their pages when faced with computer problems, the patience to keep printing out their final pages when an editor finds a mistake and the independence to finish what needs done without being told. The next two pages highlight the talents of our J2 boys.



## RICKEY MILITELLO

Rickey is our 'Jack of all Trades.' From putting out a neighborhood fire to cajoling the library ladies into giving us their printer, he is our man. He is also Vice-President of Quill and Scroll. He diligently scheduled several meetings that hardly anyone bothered to attend. Oh well, he had fun dressing up as Cat in the Hat for Dr. Suess week.. Despite his attempt to portray himself as an Italian Mafia member, he's more likely to spend his time fighting fires with East Alton Explorer Post 2333 than shooting Vinny's in-laws.

*Stories and Layout by*
*Sarahjay Whitney, coverstory editor*

## Joe Hilgard

As our humor editor, Joe's sarcastic sense of humor has brought many bizarre and thought-provoking humor articles to the *RBW*, such as knowledge pills from the future, Pac-man, and mutant cheese pizza. Joe is a funny guy, who never does anything, and yet still manages to get an A. Once when Joe hadn't completed an assignment, Mrs. Gvillo (the student teacher) gave him "the look." Joe's guilty conscience quickly responded, "Don't look at me like that!" And he wonders why he's still single.

## Anthony Gater

Gater is the true *wild animal* of J2. He helps J2 keep it real. Thirsty Thursday and Freaky Friday are unofficial J2 holidays, thanks to this bad boy. Other than Friday's entertainment, Gater helps out where ever he's needed, mostly sports. He never ceases to surprise everyone. Gater also loves 'pimpin it.' (Notice him on the cover.) All of us girls in J2, feel sorry for the girls of the college he attends next year. And we also have a great respect for Shereece Wallace.

# IMALS ON THE LOOSE!



## Kenny Ross

Kenny Ross is our news editor. He is a history buff. His knowledge of history and current events makes him an invaluable news editor. Sure he has his occasional spelling error, but who really wants to read a news story written by Gater our sports writer?

Kenny's second hobby is debating, especially with Mrs. Brave. To this day, there is a dollar bill taped to her blackboard, its headline: Kenny lost. This was such a monumental achievement for Mrs. Brave, because Kenny rarely loses. However, when he does lose, it only motivates him to work harder towards his goal. This is an attribute which makes him a valuable member of J2.

## Carl McMullen

Carl is a fun guy, which comes in useful since he is the entertainment editor. Carl has his page finished before deadline and his articles are always timely and witty. Carl is also the ring leader of a clique, made up of Carl, Alex and Kenny, who J2 affectionately calls 'The Three Musketeers.' This group leads J2 during the majority of its class discussions. Carl's strong leadership skills makes up for the fact that he strongly believes that Nabokov is a hypercritic. He has the wonderful talent of helping other people when he finishes his page.

## Zac West

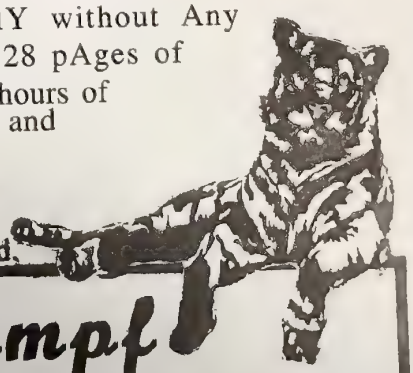
Zac manages *The RedBird Word*'s webpage, which is invisible. So don't try to find it. Zac is also very good at brainstorming. Now his idea might not necessarily be the end result, but he allows others to bounce their creative ideas off himself and enhance their ideas. Zac is also the family guy of J2. Staying with the same girl since freshman year is not something many guys can brag about. J2 has many bets on when they'll split. *cough (Best of luck, Ernie!) cough*

## Jeff McDonald

Jeff is one of the few gentlemen in J2. Class would definitely not be the same without him. He doesn't talk a lot, but when he does, he makes everyone laugh. Along with this and his great sense of humor, it's easy to understand why he always writes for Humor 2. Another of Jeff's talents is preserving through muddy cross country tracks and *RBW*'s crappy computer breakdowns. Jeff is also an award-winning journalist. Because of his perseverance, he is a finalist in the The ASNE/Quill & Scroll National Photography/ Writing Contest.

## Alex McMullen

Alex is *The RedBird Word's* copy editor. This job requires an abundance of patience. Journalists like to procrastinate, especially *RBW* ones, so most times Alex will be handed the whole paper to copy edit the night before deadline. Alex is also this year's *Calliope* editor. *Calliope* is a literary magazine of Alton High students' work. This is a huge joB, which he's completed virtUallY without Any assistanCe-- that's 28 pAges of dedication, endLess hours of continuaLly typIng, and fOur PreParE!d announcements, which were never read.



## Blake Schrumpf

Blake is J2's original hearthrob, and does an excellent job as sports Editor. Whenever one of Blake's editors asks him to do an odd job he completes it with timeliness and dedication. His great smile and cheery disposition are priceless during deadline week when everyone is tense and stressed out, which is probably why he always manages to get away with writing about Alton High's hockey team all the time.

I THINK OUR NEWSPAPER NEEDS A NEW ADVICE COLUMNIST, SO I'M APPLYING FOR THE JOB.
SEE, I'VE WRITTEN SOME SAMPLE ANSWERS TO PEOPLE WHO WRITE IN.
"STOP WHINING AND GET A LIFE, BOZO."
"DON'T TELL ME YOUR STUPID PROBLEMS. I'VE GOT PLENTY OF MY OWN."
"GO SOAK YOUR HEAD, YOU BIG BABY."
"WANT SOME ADVICE? DROP DEAD."
I GUESS THAT COVERS ABOUT EVERYTHING.
CAN YOU IMAGINE DOING THIS FOR MONEY? WHAT A RACKET!

# Real-life problems always solve themselves

*~or why complaining is not worth your time~*

When I was born, my mom said that I wasn't the typical baby. Most, she said, come out kicking and screaming. I, on the other hand, came out whining and complaining about how my milk wasn't warm.

Fast-forward to high school. I'm standing at the bottom of an eternity of steps, and all I can think about is how many times I will trip up them over the next four years. With this thought fresh in my mind, I took the first four steps . . . and down I went. A great start to high school, indeed.

Four years later, I entered the "fun" period of senior year: college admission. Being a complete idiot, I applied to every top school I could think of and completely disregarded finances. A few months later, I'm heading to my safety school after a nice discussion with my father about how my family has no money, (three cheers for higher education!!!)

In eighteen years, the best lesson I have learned has been the hardest to accept. Life gets to a point where circumstances are out of our hands, and fate takes over. In earnest, we all must accept reality for what it is and realize that complaining is worthless in all situations.

I struggled with this idea immensely, especially in high school. I always had the perception that any situation could be handled with a certain amount of "constructive complaining." As a wise man once said, "That which is worth fighting for is worth dying for."

In my freshman year, I began to develop a voice for myself. I justified my actions with the basis that a person who doesn't speak up will never be heard. This belief, though, agitates many people and leads to much dissapointment in situations.

Now, I stand on the brink of the rest of my life. I have finally realized that passionate arguing loses all its meaning in the face of adverse conditions and stagnant minds. My new mindset is to consider the pros and cons of debating before engaging in the action.

When faced with a discouraging situation, consider the following: Life is too important to be taken seriously. These simple words from playwright Oscar Wilde speak volumes when applied to everyday situations. Keep positive in all you do, and try not to trip up the stairs.

# The fine arts flourish in St. Louis for the summer

*Jenn Hueting*

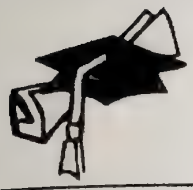
St. Louis is singing and dancing its way into a summer full of fun periences. The city houses several entertainment venues, from the inning to professional level.

The Fabulous Fox stands strong in the heart of St. Louis as it tinuously offers fine professional performances. The musical ing!" will begin the Fox's busy summer schedule. "Swing!," inated for six Tony Awards, will be performed from May 30- 1. This musical features over 30 dance numbers, ranging from a ntic to comical mood. The many vocal performances as well as arating sounds of the swing band are features unique to this show. ng!" is comprised of several classic tunes including "Boogie gie Bugle Boy" and "Sing, Sing, Sing!".

The Lion King" will pounce its way into the Fox Theater on st 22 and run through October 12. This Disney production combines the rhythms of the African Pridelands with a collection of Elton John songs. The actors' beautiful costumes and makeup bring exotic animals to life right on stage.

St. Louis also houses excellent theaters at the pre-professional level. Washington University's Edison Theater, which is now celebrating its 30th year, features several performances by the dance, music and drama students at Washington University.

The Center of Contemporary Arts, located at the heart of University City, is a studio devoted to providing the community with diverse performances, exhibitions and educational programs. The Center offers students and adults classes ranging from ballet to art and features their work, as well as guest professional work, in its theater and art gallery. For more information visit: www.fabulousfox.com, edisontheatre.wustl.edu and www.cocastl.org.



# Movin' On Up

RBW

MAY

**University of Missouri**
Tyler Dunn
Erin Hill
Carrie Hoelscher
Kenny Ross
Courtney Schien
Derek Vaughan

**University of Illinois**
Maureen Blaine
Joahnna Bratton
Tiffany Chandler
Jessica Clark
Drew Funkhauser
Regan Joehl
Chris Lauschke
Stanley Lawrence
Natalie Lewis
Carl McMullen
Amy Stabell
BJ Thompson
Aaron Veicht

**SIUE**
Laura Chartrand
Brian Enloe
Kristin Hammond
Laura Hickerson
April Logan
Mike McCann
Danielle McCrady
Leslie Murphy
Andy O'Guinn
Danielle Petras
Patrick Read
Jessica Ritter
Jake Sweetman
Ly Tran

**SIUC**
Josh Beard
Levi Hausmen
Alicia Johnson
Kenny Williams
Andrea Zimmermann

**Lindenwood University**
Sarah Cleaves
Zac West
Kenny Woods

**Southeast Missouri State**
Anthony Gater

**Washington University**
Brandon Krepel

**Dartmouth University**
Joe Hilgard

**Monmouth College**
Abbey Bates

**Carlton College**
Jeff McDonald

**University of Kentucky**
Paul Clark

**Ranken Tech**
Andrew Mouser
Stephen Plopper
Dennis Smith

**Millikin University**
Jody Cox
Susan Deppe
Amber Evans

**Rend Lake College**
Brian Kuddes

**Universal Technical Institute**
Josh Ash

**Dominican University**
Steven Stone

**Jackson State University**
Consuela Barham
Leah Jackson
Corliss James

**Western Illinois University**
Ashley Cox
Stephanie Dykemen
Lauren Gebauer
Caitlin Peach
Joe Roderick
Wayne Zumwalt

**Bradley University**
Blake Schrumpf

**Maryville University**
Kelly Brooks

**Denver Art Institute**
Jamie Heusinkvfeld

**Wake Forest University**
Erika Harris

**Florissant Valley- St. Louis**
Michelle McCrady
Tarika Sharp

**Illinois College**
Carey Cappel
Joe Calmese
Jessica Crivello
Kayla Nolte
Cody Zippman

**Illinois State University**
Taylor Nix
Jenny Williamson

**McKendree College**
Ben Laux

**Saint Louis University**
Scott Jaffry

**Aurora University**
Amber Stalcup

**Boston University**
Lindsay Dubree

**Hannibal LaGrange College**
Katharine Grable

**Augustana College**
Stacy Gillson

**St Louis College of Pharmacy**
Eland Siddle
Alex McMullen

**Central Bible College-Springfield**
Darren Williams Jr.

**LCCC**
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Nathan Anderson
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Lisa Beck
Shawana Burgess
Becki Carpenter
Stephanie Carrington
Erin Cunningham
Keosha De Bruce
John Farmer
Grant Fessler
Christine Gill
Tom Gillette
Sarah Gossett
Josh Grummel
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Donald Jackson
Jon Kribs
Ray Lewis
Ashley McAfoos
Rickey Militello
Amanda Myer
Lee Nelson
Anna Roach
Jennifer Russell
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Jamarcus Smith
Christina Springman
Matt Sutphin
Amanda Thomas
Nikki Trent
Laura Woulfe
Audrey Wildhagen
Jamar Woodard
Jenny Zielinski

**Air Force**
Nathan Bodkins
Kim Brakeville

**Marine Corp**
Nathan Bernard
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# What middle school sports did for me

When I was in elementary school, I had a handicap that all second-grade girls feared. I couldn't climb the monkey bars. Being a dancer, I had very little upper-arm strength. Thus, I became a desolate wanderer of the playground until I found refuge on the soccer field.

At Gilson Brown, I became a female star at soccer and kickball. When I moved up to middle school, I was crushed to find soccer was not a school sport. The only sports for girls required upper-arm strength-- volleyball, softball and cheerleading. Then my dad suggested cross-country. However, I was confused. "Cross-country... skiing?" I asked. I had heard of that from the Winter Olympics.

The first day of practice cleared up any misconceptions. This was cross-country running. The coach explained it was a sport that could not be matched. It involved rigorous running up and down hills and through rugged trails in the woods.

Suddenly it was the first meet. The next day I noticed a certain status that was tagged behind my name-- athlete. This gave me a pride that I'd never known before. I didn't even have to be a cheerleader to be recognized. I could even boast a feat that most other athletes couldn't-- I could run two to three miles without stopping.

Cross-country has given me many parts of my personality. First, it gave me perseverance. When I began to reach the two or three mile marker in practice, I could always feel my legs turning to lead. Instead of walking or sitting down, I would keep going because I knew to become a champion I couldn't take breaks. In my mind, to be a champion meant I knew that I had given my all in that race not the place or time I received.

Strength was another quality I gained. As a child, I was diagnosed with asthma and later vocal chord dysfunction. Running should have been my greatest fear but instead was my greatest feat.

I also learned leadership. Running is both an individual and a team sport. I had to be a leader for myself so I wouldn't quit on that last leg of the race when I was all by myself surrounded by eerie woods. I also had to be a leader for my teammates to encourage them that the pain in their sides really wasn't that bad.

By the time eighth grade arrived, I was already looking ahead. I knew I had a place waiting for me in high school. I knew there would be a bunch of crazy kids who would get up at six a.m. to run four or five miles then play a game pickup game of football, ultimate frisbee or soccer for a cool down. Knowing this helped ease my transition in the high school.

Now due to lack of money from the state, the program that was vital to my evolution as a person is nonexistent in the Alton middle schools. Baseball and softball were also exterminated. I can only imagine what the kids like me, quiet and shy, will do next year.

There is a way to right a wrong. The Alton Athletic Association is trying desperately to raise private funds to keep these sports alive and not just a part of middle school history.

Unfortunately, progress is slow-going for the AAA because of a lack of community involvement. Since the school board announced the cut, the board president has pleaded for parental support. Sadly, there have been few more parents to get involved in the AAA. I attended a board meeting in March. I witnessed many parents getting up and complaining about the sports cuts. Once again, the president of AAA offered them an opportunity to help. My question to the public: *Where are you now?*

The AAA holds meetings on the first Tuesday of every month at 7 p.m. in the AHS cafeteria.

Andrea Zimmerman

# Tanners: CAVEAT APRICATIOR

*Keegan Thompson and Andrea Zimmermann, features editor*

Golden brown or crispy red. As spring rolls around and summer comes into view, thousands of high school students race to the tanning beds to get that sun-kissed look. No one wants to be pasty white or blend into a white wall.

Tanning is a dangerous hobby and a billion dollar industry. Prolonged exposure in the tanning bed can lead to a variety of problems. Along with the chance for skin cancer, there is also premature aging, severe skin damage and scarring.

However, those are only a few problems that may occur. A tanner may also find that he or she may suffer UVA and UVB radiation exposure which an lead to a dysfunctional immune system, eye burns, cataracts and photosensitivity reactions to medications.

There is a myth about tanning salons going around that they are less dangerous that the actual sun. Dr. Chanasue, a graduate of McGill University in Montreal, is a dermatologist in the Alton area. He said, "There is no difference between a tanning bed and the sun. It is the [ultraviolet] rays that are bad. A UV ray is bad no matter where it is."

He also explains, "Most people don't realize there is no such thing as a tan. A dark tan in really just a deep burn."

Tanning can also hurt the eyes. "People who have blue, green or gray eyes are more susceptible to develop cataracts when they are older, " Chanasue said.

According to the American Academy for Dermatology, AAD, on an average day in the United States, more than one million people invest both time and money visiting tanning salons. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports nearly 700 emergency visits per year related to tanning salon exposure.

The only benefit to tanning is the resulting color, but tanners beware of the self-inflicted damages in the long run. "Most people don't see the effects of tanning until they are 30 years old. Applying sunscreen every day can reduce the risk of premature aging and skin cancer."

** The Latin term caveat apricatior means let the sun-bathers beware.*

# Skip your homework; you will thank me

*Baron Joseph Benjamin Edgar "Skiggz" "'Eggplant' Marinara" Hilgard III, PhD, humor editor, world's most eligible bachelor*

Indeed, Alton High School, it has been a long, strange journey. We've laughed; we've cried; we've watched "Bikini Hoedown;" but in the end, we've all learned something, something more than schoolwork, more than anatomy, something that....

Aw, screw it! Present-day Alton High School, I tell you now that I am from the future!

And I can safely say, taking a look around, that things in the present sure are lame. Playstation 2 instead of Gamestation X 3000, cars that run on fossil fuels instead of dirt (and they can't even do Mach 2)... yup, things are so much cooler in the future.

Just from how far in the future am I? Well, I'd tell you, but I don't think your old-fashioned, present-day minds could really comprehend it.

*Photo by Jostens*

Why am I here? Well, obviously, one of you present-day numbskulls is gonna screw something up, so I'm saving the future by stopping you. This "goofy-looking shirt," as you call it, is actually an advanced protective suit. And don't even think about bugging me with that time-travel paradox junk. In the future, we've got it all figured out.

You foolish presentlings thought all along that I'm some sort of genius, but the real trick is, in the future, knowledge came in pill form. While you all labored away, scratching your primitive heads and doing "homework," I took a single little pill when I was four and ever since knew everything I needed.

Do that schoolwork, monkey! Spend your days and nights clamoring for a grade, only to find that all your hard work was later rendered obsolete! Suckers!

Still, some of the teachers and staff here are pretty cool, but that's probably because they're from the future, too.

In conclusion, since I'm from the future, I'm better, and everyone should try to be more like me: egotistical. And I'll have you know this haircut is really cool in the future, you cavemen.

# Wash-out Saddam just stockpiling booze

*Baron Joseph Benjamin Edgar "Skiggz" "'Eggplant' Marinara" Hilgard III, PhD, humor editor, world's most eligible bachelor*

Former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein has fallen on hard times. After his defeat in the second Gulf War, he had to flee to places unknown to spend the rest of his life in exile.

Reflecting on the misfortunes he suffered from stockpiling weapons, Saddam has chosen a new hobby: stockpiling booze.

"Making homemade moonshine in my basement's still really takes me back, you know? It reminds me of the old days when the guys and I would mix up some mustard gas in the garage," Saddam said.

At first, UN inspectors thought they had found Saddam stockpiling weapons once again in exile with the intent of a vengeful attack on Israel or Kuwait. However, when inspectors tested the operational status of these weapons, none of them seemed to work properly.

"Yeah, those 'missile warheads,' you'd be surprised how much bourbon you can hide in one of those if you take out the payload," Saddam said.

"One time the missus decided she'd throw out all my booze. Of course, I later had her gruesomely executed for this under my gruesomely twisted variant of Islamic law, but I got thirsty that afternoon. Real thirsty. For booze. So I told my wife that I was going to 'inspect the anthrax labs.' She never knew, and me and the guys got completely bent. Me and my buddies Jack Daniels and Jim Beam were kickin' it."

Saddam showed remarkable ingenuity in dodging UN laws concerning legal drinking age and liquor store regulations. Among the stockpiled items found were artillery shells ideal for storing double bourbons and surface-to-air missiles capable of carrying up to 40 oz. of malt liquor.

*A down-on-his luck Saddam smuggles Bacardi rum inside a heavy mortar shell once used for nerve gas.*

"Sure, it's a little dangerous. All this equipment comes from my old labs, which, back in the day, made nerve gas and plutonium and stuff like that. So when I swig down a test tube of who-knows-what, maybe it's a mint julep, maybe it's something that'll make my gums turn black and my stomach turn into soup and my fingers fall off. It keeps things interesting," Saddam commented while reaching for a flask labeled "BIOHAZARD! Extreme risk of serious illness and/or death!"

"I think that's an old label. Maybe? I'm pretty sure I didn't keep cyanide in this thing. Yeah, I don't even care anymore," he said, chugging it down.

# We go on the road again, y'all

*Jeff McDonald*

Spring break is a magical time. Flowers are blooming, birds are chirping, and a young man's fancy turns to sand and bikinis. Sunny Florida is calling my name. It's time for a road trip.

I set off with palm trees in my eyes and nine months worth of sofa change in my pocket. To make this trip on my limited budget, I am going to have to drive almost nonstop through four states. Halfway through Kentucky, I'm so tired I see Marlon Brando hitchhiking on the side of the road. Maybe this isn't such a good plan. Still, I can almost feel the sand between my toes. I figure that if I just keep driving long enough, I'll get to an ocean sooner or later.

My four-lane highway shrinks to a two-lane road to a strip of gravel. I am soon picking my way down a pair of dirt tracks when the car is swallowed by a thick fog. As I blindly inch along, I suddenly feel a hard crunch and a grunting noise. It sounds like I just killed Marlon Brando.

I get out of my car and prepare to roll the deceased Oscar-winner off the road. To my relief, it is just a wandering mule. (A mule? What if . . . no, of course not. It couldn't be . . .) The animal trots off unscathed. The same cannot be said of my car. The crumpled front end now has a Brando-sized dent smashed in it. When I turn the key, it sounds like a mongoose is trying to escape from a garbage can. It's getting late, so I decide my best bet is to head back into "town" and look for a place to hole up until morning.

I soon stumble upon the Snotwood Ranch motel/mobile home park. (You can't spell rustic without rust.) When I tell the desk clerk I need a room, he asks if I want it for the whole night or just the hourly rate. Why would anyone want an hourly rate? He points to the young lady standing on the curb outside, who takes a swig of gin without removing the cigarette from her mouth. I guess she's not the doorman.

As the clerk hands me my key and complementary wad of toilet paper (only the finest at the Snotwood Ranch), I casually ask him where I am, exactly. "Son, thissa here is Snotwood County." (Oh, really? I thought it was Disneyland.) No, what state? (Please don't let it be. Please, no, no . . .)

"West Vir-"

I have heard enough. My head is throbbing, so I decide to check out the room. The TV only gets porn and fishing channels, but at least there's a spittoon.

After a restful sleep and a refreshing hand-pump shower, I head off on an empty stomach (my continental breakfast has heartworm tags in it) to see about getting my car fixed. The clerk recommends the local grease monkey. "He has the lot with all the junk cars out front." That describes every house on this block. "He's got a big ol' dog named One-Eyed Pete." Ah, much better.

I ease my ailing vehicle into Slim Jim's Towing and Salvage. Jim pries his massive rear out of a lawn chair and waddles toward me (apparently, he hasn't changed the sign in awhile). As he peers under the hood, I feel One-Eyed Pete get romantic with my leg. After a few seconds, Jim mumbles, "Son, you done tore yur radiator hose." How much for a new one? He cracks a grin, flashing his pearly white. "Lessa say, four-hunned bucks?" My jaw drops. As I turn to go, the first notes of *Dueling Banjos* begin wafting out of the surrounding woods. Will cash be okay?

After this excursion, I was a little light on funds, so I head back towards the highway. After passing the same broken refrigerator four times, I notice I'm running low on gas. I pull into the only gas station I've seen in the last 12 hours. After I start the pump, I go over to ask the attendant how to get back on the highway. "Directions is gonna cost extra," he sputters, so I hand him my last few bucks.

As he gets to the part where I pass the moose carcass, I hear the pump shut off. Seeing as my cash supply is now tapped, I needed an exit plan. In my best confused tourist voice, I ask him if he can break a hundred dollar bill. "No change over $10," he grunts. Well, I guess I'll have to take what I can get. With a twinkle in his lazy eye, he goes back to his coffee can to fish out some change. I leave Snotwood County in a cloud of burning rubber.

I decide it's time for this adventure to come to an end, so I pull an all-nighter back home. The moral of this story? Next year, I'm going skiing.

**AHS After-Grad**

**Seniors**, join the party at the Riverbend Arena!

The celebration starts at *midnight* Friday, May 30 and ends at 5 a.m. Saturday, May 31.

Each senior is allowed to bring **one guest!**

Get a **FREE** t-shirt with admission!

There will be a **DJ, CASINO GAMES, PRIZES, A VELCRO WALL, AND MUCH MORE!!!**

# RedBird Word Editors for 2003-2004

**Editor-in-chief:** Jennifer Hueting

**Managing editor:** Ashley Freeman

**News editor:** Brady McAninch

**Entertainment editor:** Laura Gossett

**Features editor:** Keegan Thompson

**Humor editor:** Blair Conner

**Sports editor:** Daniel Hinkle

**Double Truck editor:** Jim Seymour

**Backpage editor:** Katie Gineris

**Copy Editor:** Claire Yanta

**Chief Photographer:** Courtney Armstead

**Art director:** Kate Stuart

**Business Manager:** Chris Hesh

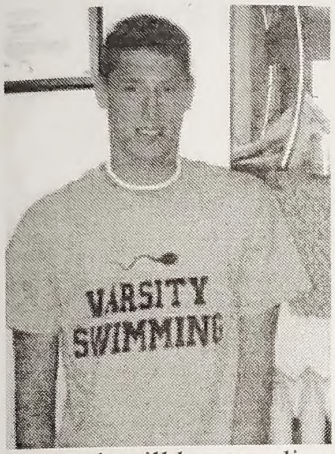
**Webpage and Tech Director:** AJ Ventimiglia

*Congratulations to all and good luck next year!*

-- RBW staff 2002-2003

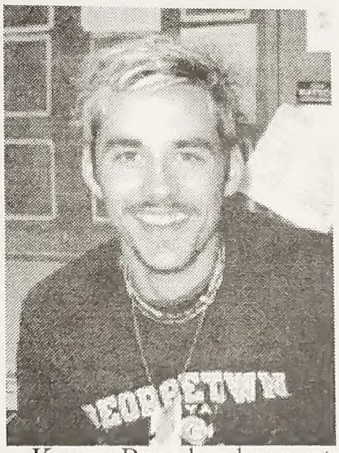
# Redbird Word players of the year

SWIMMING



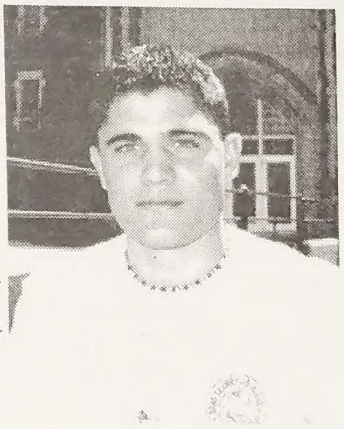

Wyane Zumwalt will be attending Western Illinois University on a scholarship to swim his way into the record books.

TRACK



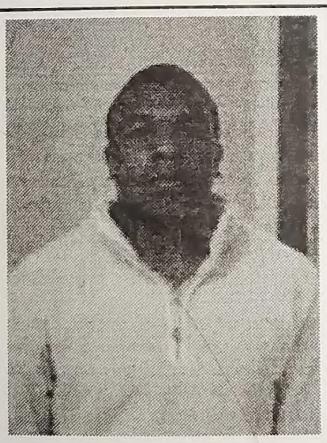
Kenny Ross has been a track leader and will be going to college at Mizzou.

WRESTLING



Ben Laux will be attending McKendree College on a full ride scholarship for football.

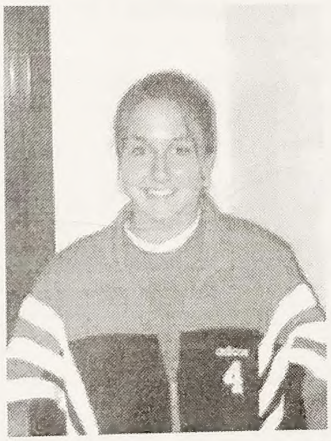
FOOTBALL



Anthony Gater was a four year letterman who has turned down many scholarship offers to walk-on at Southeast Missouri State University.

Cody Zippmann will be attending Illinois College and he plans to continue being explosive on the baseball field.

SOCCER



Stacy Gillson will be attending Augustana University to play soccer

# Teamwork: What it's all about

During my four years at Alton High I learned the meaning of the word teamwork and what it takes to obtain it. It can be experienced in some form or another on every team at Alton High. For some people this word means to be on a team, but for my fellow teammates and I it means something much more... I learned that it doesn't matter how good your team is or what your record is, the only thing that matters is how much you are willing to work together for victory. I'm not just talking about sports but everything you do in life.

When I think back on the years I spent playing sports, a quote my high school soccer coach, Greg Nasello runs through my head: Everything you ardently desire, mentally envision, and enthusiastically act upon, will eventually come to pass.

All of the coachs I've had through the years have made me the athlete that I am today. My coachs taught me many lessons in life that I couldn't have learned anywhere else. The quote by Coach Nasello has always had an impact on everyone who has heard it. It calls for hard work, both mentally and physically.

This year I was honored to a part of the Alton Redbirds AA League Championship Hockey team. This team had the desire and the heart to go anywhere. If I learned anything from playing hockey, it was to never give up. We turned heads with our impressive finish to the season. The team gave it everything and never gave up even when the odds were against us. I have never played a sport with a better bunch of guys. This team will always be in my heart.

Sports have helped me grow as a person through my life, and my coaches have helped me to do my best. For their help I am very grateful.

Blake Schrumpf

# Hard work and dedication pays

Gasping for air, I stood on the fifty-yard-line. I was overwhelmed from accomplishments unthinkable to others but imaginable for my fellow teammates and me. On Friday, 13 the minds of Alton football youth were changed forever. Though Alton had played East St. Louis to the wire several times in 22 years, East's 28 game-winning streak had not been broken. No one in the area could explain how the "Flyers" could always fly away from the Redbird's grasp. The 2002-2003 Alton Redbirds now know that hard work and dedication pays off.

After barely making the playoffs from a controversial forfeit and being destroyed in the first round of the playoffs, we made an oath to be a legitimate playoff team and most importantly to beat East Side.

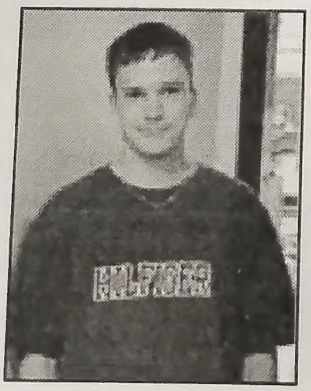
The sweating started the week after Thanksgiving break 2002. We stayed on the same weightlifting program, but we took it 100 percent more serious. Everyone saw the improvement in strength, but the team unity wasn't there. Learning the game came easy, but the coach questioned our playing speed.

Morning practices helped us brush up our special teams and our team camps helped us pick up the speed. Going to several team camps over the summer helped us to become more competitive. We put in the hard work and left all of the blood, sweat and a few players that weren't committed to the program on the field. Every player on the roster truly sold out. Everyone believed in each other, and it was the start of a new feeling for the Alton program. It was a long road that was far from easy.

After finishing the regular season 6-3 and beating the undefeated Flyers, I finally realized what it took to accomplish my goals in life. Hard work and dedication will drive anyone to success.

# HOCKEY

Andy Eaton #6



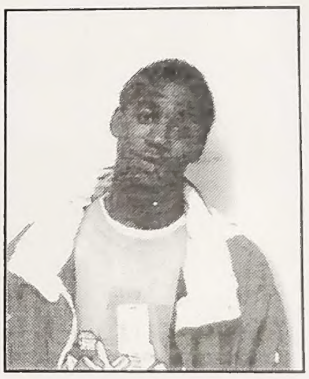
Blake Shrumpf's excellent goal-tending skills made him perfect for this award. However, he has decided to put the stick down and focus on his education at Bradley Univesity.

# Athletes of the Year

## VOLLEYBALL

Corliss James has excelled in volleyball and has grown in the game substantially, but has decided not to pursue her career at Jackson State University in Mississippi..

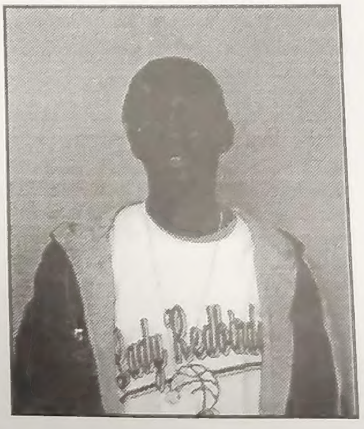
## Boys' BASKETBALL



Brandon Patterson has decided to play basketball in college. He is undecided where to play though Brandon has played four years of Redbird basketball. This year he was a great asset and was a true three point threat.

## Girls' BASKETBALL

Michelle McCrady is a four-year letterman who plans to contiue her career at Florissant Valley Community College in St.. Louis.. Michelle has earned first team all-conference for three consecutive years. She was almost pure from the free throw line.




The Redbird Word would like to apologize for the sports that were not covered due to the lack of information from our coaches and some time-constraint problems.

# Amy's Antics



## RedBird random award of the month

### Most Determined

Courtney Schien

# Taurus traits

The astrological sign for those who's birthdays lie between April 21 and May 21 is Taurus. Also known as the bull, Taurus individuals are patient, reliable, warmhearted, loving, persistent, determined, placid and cautious. They also are jealous, possessive, resentful, inflexible, self-indulgent and greedy. Taurus likes include: stability, being attractive, nature, meditation, comfort and pleasure. They dislike disruption, being pushed to hard, synthetic objects, being rushed and being indoors.

# Gemini traits

Gemini is the sign for those who's birthdays fall between May 22 and June 21. Gemini's symbol is the twins. Geminis are adaptable, versatile, communicative, witty, intellectual, eloquent, youthful, and lively. They can also be nervous, tense, superficial, inconsistent, cunning and inquisitive. Gemini's likes include: talking, the unusual, variety, multitasking and reading. They dislike feeling tied down, school, being in a rut, idle minds and being alone.

# Farwell to my friends

*Amy Stabell, backpage editor*

Good-bye to all my backpage fans. I hope I have amused you with my wordfinds and random articles this year. I will miss helping the students at AHS to not pay attention in class. I will leave you now to a life of adventure and excitement, but I will never forget the fun I have had in these short four years.

# Licence plate Match-up

Try to match all the senior licence plates to their owners. Turn in your answers, typed or legibaly hand written, to room 401. Prizes will be awarded to the top three competitors.

1. ZIPP 51
2. 1856 XR
3. OGIE 32
4. KREPEL 2
5. 199 8468
6. STTCLX1
7. ID DAD1
8. B880 088
9. ZC6079
10. ECRTLY 5
11. MLITLO 7
12. 31BAS
13. SNEW 12
14. A ZIMM 18
15. SKIGZ 42
16. POOKS 4
17. Z WEST 78

MCMULLEN TWINS
AMY STABELL
ZAC WEST
JOE HILGARD
ANDREA ZIMMERMANN
KRISTIN HAMMOND
BLAKE SCHRUMPF
CODY ZIPPMANN
REGAN JOEHL
ALEXANDRA FREYER
ERIN HILL
SARAH CLEVES
LAUREN GEBAURER
LORI PERKINS
BRANDON KREPEL
ANDY O'GUINN
RICKEY MILITELO

# Wordfind

COLLEGE
SUMMER
SANDALS
PROM
LIMO
VACATION
GRADUATION
FREEDOM
SHORT SLEEVE
GARTER
SWIMSUIT
BEACH
VALEDICTORIAN
CAREER
SWIMMING
DRESS
GRASS
SAND

| C | A | R | E | E | R | R | E | M | M | U | S | V |
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| G | E | G | E | L | L | O | C | G | Y | R | A | E |
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| S | W | I | M | M | I | N | G | D | A | N | A | E |
| J | I | G | L | P | I | O | I | U | C | A | S | L |
| L | M | A | E | J | D | C | F | A | H | S | S | S |
| A | S | D | M | K | T | R | E | T | R | A | G | T |
| D | U | O | W | O | G | N | J | I | S | X | Z | R |
| N | I | M | R | X | R | E | S | O | S | Y | A | O |
| A | T | I | P | F | C | P | G | N | E | V | D | H |
| S | A | L | S | V | F | O | E | F | R | I | E | S |
| N | M | O | D | E | E | R | F | D | D | T | S | D |